

State and Local Government in Louisiana: An Overview 2008-2012 Term

CHAPTER 2 — STATE GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS

Part I. Culture, Recreation and Tourism

Responsibility for preserving, cultivating, and interpreting Louisiana's cultural and natural heritage lies primarily with the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (CRT). In addition, the department has an obligation to promote aspects of Louisiana's unique heritage in order to attract visitors to the state. In the language of the Revised Statutes,

The department shall be responsible for the development, maintenance, and operation of library, park, recreation, museum, and other cultural facilities; the statewide development and implementation of cultural, recreational, and tourism programs; and planning for the future leisure needs of the people. (R.S. 36:201(B))

In meeting these responsibilities, the department contributes to the quality of life of Louisiana citizens both directly, by providing recreational and educational opportunities, and indirectly, by contributing to the economic health of the state through income generated by the tourism industry.

Louisiana Rebirth Plan

The Louisiana tourism industry suffered a tremendous blow in the fall of 2005 due to the devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Many state parks, historical sites, museums, libraries, and welcome centers were damaged by the storms and some remain closed. In the wake of the storms, the Louisiana Rebirth Plan was designed to guide the efforts of CRT in rebuilding Louisiana's tourism and cultural economy industries. The rebirth plan outlines four key results crucial to the recovery of our state. They are as follows:

- (1) Rebuild Louisiana to worldwide preeminence as a top tourist destination.
- (2) Make Louisiana's Cultural Economy the engine of economic and social rebirth.
- (3) Build better lives and livelihoods than before for all Louisiana's people.
- (4) Make Louisiana's recovery the standard for high performance, accountability, and ethical behavior.

Using this statewide plan as a guide, CRT can expedite Louisiana's return to worldwide preeminence as a top tourist and cultural destination.

Administration

The administrative structure of CRT follows closely the standard arrangement utilized in most of the executive branch departments. (See discussion of the executive branch in Chapter 1.) As noted therein, however, CRT is unique in the way its officers are appointed. The secretary, the undersecretary, and three of the five assistant secretaries are appointed by and serve at the

pleasure of the lieutenant governor.

The assistant secretaries of the offices of the state library and the state museum are exceptions to this appointment procedure.

The state librarian serves as the assistant secretary of the office of the state library. (R.S. 36:207(A)(2)) The state librarian is selected, subject to consent of the Senate, by the board of commissioners of the State Library of Louisiana, and he serves as the executive secretary of that board. His term of office is five years and he is subject to removal only for cause and only by unanimous vote of the board of commissioners. (R.S. 25:5, 6)

The position of assistant secretary of the office of state museum is filled by the director of the Louisiana State Museum who is selected by the board of directors of the Louisiana State Museum. The director serves as the executive and administrative officer of the board but is also subject to the control and supervision of the secretary of CRT. The museum director is subject to removal only for cause and can be removed only after a hearing of the board. (R.S. 25:343)

OFFICES

Most of the programmatic activity of the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism is executed through one of its five offices: the office of the state library, the office of the state museum, the office of state parks, the office of cultural development, and the office of tourism.

- Office of the State Library

One of the primary duties of the office of the state library is to provide planning, coordination, and leadership to and for the various local, regional, and school libraries around the state so as to provide every citizen with access to free, high quality library service. The office also has its own library and collection (in Baton Rouge), which includes specialized materials for supporting the business of state government. The office coordinates intrastate and interstate interlibrary loans and establishes and supervises library services in the states health and correctional facilities.

The office is also responsible for the Louisiana State Documents Depository. Under the depository system, certain libraries are designated as depositories of documents produced by state agencies and each agency must supply copies of documents it produces to the depository library. Thus, citizens have access to any state document from a single source rather than having to find the agency which produced each specific document. (R.S. 25:121 et seq.)

Through the years, the state library has been involved in the literacy effort by purchasing and circulating appropriate materials to public libraries and other literacy providers. Literacy grants have enabled the state library to coordinate and fund statewide volunteer tutor training workshops and to strengthen the adult literacy programs in Louisiana's prison libraries. Additionally, the state library holds an annual book festival to honor Louisiana writers and to present an enjoyable and free opportunity for citizens to hear and meet those authors who contributed to the extraordinary literary heritage of our state.

Local Government Activity: In addition to the state library, any city or parish is authorized to establish and operate a public library. In creating a library, a local

governing authority is required to create a governing board which is responsible for adopting rules and regulations governing the library and for employing a librarian and other employees. If approved by the voters, the parish or municipality may levy taxes for construction, maintenance, and support of the library. (R.S. 25:211 et seq.) The state library administers state and federal grants for local libraries.

Since 1998, the state library has provided dedicated (not dial-up) Internet access at 333 public library buildings throughout the state. A cooperative partnership between the state library and individual parish library systems in 2005 allowed bandwidth to be upgraded in many parishes. Another planned upgrade in 2007-2008 will enable libraries to keep pace with the increased demands of their patrons for free, responsive Internet access.

Louisiana Gumbo Project

The "Louisiana Gumbo Project: A Recipe for Empowerment" is funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services through a matching \$470,000 National Leadership Grant for Libraries, awarded to the state library in partnership with the state museum, The Historic New Orleans Collection, and the Louisiana Library Network. This project provides electronic access, via digitally scanned images, to important Louisiana historical and cultural material not previously available online.

Recovery

Approximately 30% of public libraries were destroyed or severely damaged by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Several parish library systems have temporary buildings or bookmobiles serving as branches until their buildings can be rebuilt. The Gulf Coast Libraries Project is a three-year (2006-2009) initiative, funded by a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to provide for temporary facilities, replacement hardware, and planning grants.

- Office of the State Museum

The office of the state museum operates and maintains the Louisiana State Museum, including all buildings, collections, and exhibitions of the Louisiana State Museum complex in New Orleans, and other museums under its jurisdiction. (R.S. 36:208(C)) Currently the following properties constitute the state museum complex: the Cabildo, the Presbytere, the Arsenal, the Old U.S. Mint, Madame John's Legacy, and the 1850 House, all of which are located in the New Orleans French Quarter and are designated as national historic landmarks. Additional properties under the jurisdiction of the office of state museum include: Louisiana State Museum Collections Storage Facility in New Orleans, the Creole House and Jackson House in New Orleans, the Lower Pontalba Building in New Orleans, the Wedell-Williams Aviation Museum and the Cypress Sawmill Museum in Patterson, the Old Courthouse Museum in Natchitoches, the E. D. White Historic Site in Thibodaux, and the Capitol Park Complex in Baton Rouge. The artifacts held by the state museum are a vast and varied collection of documents, art objects, furnishings, and textiles dating back to Louisiana's colonial days and reflecting the rich cultural heritage embodied within our state.

Major projects currently being considered or developed by the office include the following:

- Establishment of a Louisiana Civil Rights Museum and African American Heritage Center in New Orleans.
- Development of the Museum of North Louisiana History and Sports Hall of Fame in Natchitoches.
- Development of new programming in the Old U. S. Mint, working in conjunction with the French Market Corporation in its redevelopment of the New Orleans French Market and other potential partners.

National Geographic magazine and the state museum partnered to bring a world class exhibit entitled "After the Storms" to Louisiana which has drawn international attention to our culture. The exhibit showcases images by award-winning photojournalist David Burnett, documenting ruined lives and neighborhoods in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Through this partnership, the piano of Louisiana rock 'n' roll legend Fats Domino was restored and will be on permanent display at the state museum. This partnership also enabled 15 New Orleans high school students to take part in National Geographic's PHOTO CAMP 2006, a photography workshop in which students, mentored by a National Geographic photographer, go on assignment to document their communities. The exhibit features poignant images of the Lower 9th Ward and the French Quarter.

Plans are being developed for a major new permanent exhibition on the subject of Hurricane Katrina. Scheduled to open in late 2008/early 2009, the exhibition is being developed by a team of exhibition and media designers assisted by numerous historians and scientists as well as a community advisory committee.

Outreach Services

The office of the state museum also operates outreach services in an effort to serve those who are not able to visit New Orleans or the other museum sites. It has employed a state curator who visits cultural institutions and small museums around the state and offers technical advice and support on matters relating to the preservation and display of historical materials. The office puts together small collections of museum artifacts which travel around the state for display in local libraries and other public facilities. The museum's web site offers several online exhibits which make many aspects of the museum's collections available to citizens around the state.

- Office of State Parks

The office of state parks plans, designs, constructs, operates, and maintains a system of parks, natural areas, and recreational facilities and performs the functions of the state relating to outdoor recreation development and trails. (R.S. 36:208(D)) In carrying out these functions, the office operates three classes of facilities: state parks, state historic sites, and state preservation areas.

- "State preservation areas" are those areas of exceptional scenic value which because of their unique characteristics should be preserved for current and future enjoyment.
- "State historic sites" are those areas which when evaluated on a statewide basis

possess historical, cultural, or memorial significance. The principal function of a commemorative area is to preserve and maintain a specific historical, cultural, or memorial theme.

- "State parks" are natural areas which, when evaluated on a statewide basis, possess outstanding potential for recreation utilization. The natural area must possess outstanding scenic and natural qualities to provide a recreation opportunity of high quality in a natural setting. (R.S. 56:1684)

In addition to these general definitions, the statutes set forth size and other criteria which an area must meet in order to be taken into the state parks system. As of late 2007, the office is operating approximately 16 state historic sites and 20 state parks located all around the state. The only state preservation area currently open is the state arboretum in Evangeline Parish. In April 2005, Rosedown Plantation State Historic Site in St. Francisville was designated a National Historic Landmark.

The office of state parks is guided in the acquisition and development of sites by a 15-year master plan. The plan under which the office is currently operating came into effect in 1997 and so will serve as a blueprint for development until 2012. The master plan identifies sites for development of facilities and also includes plans for program development and for increasing public awareness of the parks, historic sites, and preservation areas.

Ongoing Initiatives

- Plans are being developed for the proposed 1,786-acre Bogue Chitto State Park, which will enable visitors to experience a diversity of plant communities, wildlife, and habitats.
- Work is beginning on the 635-acre Tunica Hills State Preservation Area, which will encompass bluffs and bayous and interpretive centers telling the story of the early Tunica Indians and the later Civil War battle at nearby Como Landing.
- For the first time, wireless internet (WI-FI) has been placed in four state parks to allow visitors to use the Internet for a usage fee. This pilot program will be expanded to all state parks.
- The New Orleans City Park was placed in CRT by Act No. 395 of the 2006 Regular Session. The nonprofit City Park Association operates the park. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the park sustained approximately \$43 million in damages. CRT along with local businesses and organizations have joined thousands of volunteers and the park's staff to expedite the recovery of the park.

Local Government Activity: The office of state parks does not operate playgrounds, ball fields, or similar recreation facilities. Responsibility for these is left to local governments. State law authorizes and provides for creation of local recreation districts and many municipalities and parishes have taken advantage of this authority.

The office of state parks is designated as the state liaison agency for the administration of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund program through the U. S. Department of Interior. This program has existed since 1964 to provide matching funds

for local recreation projects.

Outdoors Outreach

Louisiana Outdoors Outreach program (LOOP) was created by the office of state parks in October 2004, to provide educational, recreational and related outdoor programs, activities and services to underserved and at-risk youth. Through a comprehensive organizational model, the goal is to enhance self-esteem, exercise the mind and body, and develop the many characteristics necessary for good citizenship. The program, currently headquartered at Fontainebleau State Park, addresses the state's fourth to twelfth grade level expectations, emphasizing environmental education, outdoor skills, and soft skills which include teamwork, problem solving, and conflict resolution.

- **Office of Cultural Development**

The office of cultural development performs the functions of the state relating to the arts, historical and archaeological preservation, crafts, humanities, cultural heritages and traditions, and related cultural programs and activities. The office also administers the provisions of law relating to the State Capitol Historic District. (R.S. 36:208(E))

Three divisions comprise the office: the division of the arts, the division of historic preservation, and the division of archaeology.

Division of the Arts

The division of the arts is responsible for state arts programs and state level administration of National Endowment for the Arts programs. The division must provide for promotion of the arts, the cultural enrichment of the people of the state, and the sustenance of artistic activity in and of the state of Louisiana, and provide technical assistance upon request. (R.S. 25:894)

The division of the arts administers several grants programs. Nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and professional artists are eligible to apply for grants. These grants are used to support all areas of artistic endeavor, dance, music, painting, etc. Funds for grants come from state appropriations and from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The stabilization program provides one and two-year support grants to arts organizations that have made an impact locally, statewide, regionally, nationally, or internationally. The capacity building program provides financial and technical assistance to artists and nonprofit organizations in an effort to support activities that strengthen their work and help them better fulfill their missions. The artist services program provides support for artistic skill development through artist mentoring.

One of the most popular grants programs is the decentralized arts funding program. Funds are distributed to each parish on a per capita basis so that each applicant is competing only with other applicants from his or her parish. The applications are evaluated and grants are awarded by one of eight regional distributing agencies. This process ensures that each parish in the state receives some arts funding and local priorities determine how the funds will be spent.

Percent for Art Program

Established by Act No. 1280 of the 1999 Regular Session, the Percent for Art program stipulates that for every state building with a construction budget of \$2 million dollars or more, one percent will be used for the creation of artwork for the building and its grounds. The purpose of the program is to provide the citizens of Louisiana with an improved public environment by investing our public buildings with works of high quality. This law adds visibility to the cultural heritage of the state and its people.

Louisiana Folklife Program

The Louisiana Folklife Program, is designed to identify, document, conserve, and present the folk cultural resources of Louisiana. Folklife includes living traditions learned informally over time within ethnic, regional, occupational, and family groups. The Louisiana Folklife Program oversees the Regional Folklife Program that places regional folklorists in universities to provide in-depth documentation of Louisiana's folk traditions and facilitate its appropriate use by the public and cultural tourism. The Regional Folklorists maintain the Louisiana Folklife Database.

Crafts Marketing Program

The division also administers the crafts marketing program, which is an economic diversification program designed to stimulate the economy by providing marketing assistance to approved craftsmen working in contemporary, revivalist, or traditional crafts. Approved program participants are allowed to use a special "Handmade by Louisiana Craftsmen" logo which has been developed by the office. (R.S. 25:897-899)

Arts Education

Act No. 175 of the 2007 Regular Session is aimed at restoring music and arts education in all public schools in the state. Act No. 175 requires the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop, adopt, and provide for the implementation of a visual arts curriculum and a performing arts curriculum in public schools over the next four years.

Division of Archeology

This division, as the name implies, is responsible for archeological concerns of the state. The state archaeologist is the director of the division. Duties of the division include the following:

- Promulgating rules and regulations concerning the recovery and study of archaeological remains.
- Maintaining the state archaeological site files, which include site records, field notes, maps, photographs, and reports.
- Functioning as legal custodian for the state's archaeological artifacts and objects.
- Implementing activities that will make available to the public information about the historic and prehistoric resources of the state.

- Serving as the archaeological advisory source for all state agencies by assisting them in evaluating any potential impact of their projects on archaeological resources.
- Administering those portions of the National Historic Preservation Act relative to archaeology. (R.S. 41:1603 et seq.)

The division manages four regional archaeologists at Louisiana State University, University of Louisiana–Monroe, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and Northwestern State University as well as a station archaeologist at Poverty Point State Historic Site.

The division is coordinating the Louisiana Ancient Mounds Trail, which is identifying and promoting the state's Indian mound and earthwork sites. The division is currently working on printing a driving trail guide for this network of 40 well-preserved and visible Indian mound sites. This guide will promote these mound sites, emphasizing the interaction of history, ecology and culture during the past 5,000 years, and providing unique educational and tourism experiences.

Division of Historic Preservation

The division of historic preservation serves as the staff of the appointed state historic preservation officer for federal programs that pertain to historic buildings, structures, and places as such appointment is required by the National Historic Preservation Act. The division also implements state historic preservation policy. More specifically, the programmatic responsibilities of the division include the following:

- Nominating Louisiana properties to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Compiling and maintaining a survey of buildings which are over 50 years old.
- Reviewing applications for the federal historic preservation tax credit program.
- Developing a comprehensive statewide historic preservation plan.
- Administering the certified local government program.
- Administering the federal historic American buildings survey program.
- Reviewing federal projects and federally assisted or licensed projects for their impact upon historic buildings and places.
- Reviewing applications for the state historic preservation tax incentive program.
- Reviewing projects in the State Capitol Historic District.
- Implementing a program of activities that will make information about the historic resources of the state available to the public.
- Providing for the management of all Federal Historic Preservation Fund monies and state funds allocated for historic preservation grants.

- Developing and implementing a program to provide public financial assistance for the preservation and enhancement of designated historic structures. (R.S. 25:911 et seq.)

Main Street

The division of historic preservation also operates the very successful Main Street program as this program has been developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The goals of this program are to rehabilitate the historic buildings in the downtown areas of small towns and to reestablish downtown as an economically viable part of the community. The program attempts to achieve these goals through comprehensive consideration of planning and ordinance review, manager and volunteer training and development, economic development, landscape planning, commercial rehabilitation, building design, real estate development, tourism, and marketing.

The division of historic preservation estimates that since 1984, more than 25 communities have been active in rehabilitating historic buildings in downtown areas and neighborhood commercial districts. Investments, including private rehabilitation and public improvements, exceed \$400 million dollars and nearly \$150 dollars have been generated locally for every one dollar invested by the state. In addition, more than 7,424 new jobs have been created by 1,740 new businesses.

In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the main street principles are being applied to neighborhood based rebuilding in New Orleans. Preservation and business revitalization grants were awarded to four New Orleans neighborhoods with established traditional commercial corridors. The business districts are North Rampart Street, Oak Street, Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard, and St. Claude Avenue.

In November 2006, CRT partnered with First Lady Laura Bush's national nonprofit Preserve America to launch the first annual Louisiana Main to Main: A Cultural Road Show. This annual event is designed to collectively showcase successful and diverse main street communities. Louisiana Main to Main encourages road trips from one main street community to the next and from one Louisiana region to another throughout the month of November.

Local Government Activity: Local governments are authorized to establish historic preservation districts. (R.S. 25:731 et seq.) After appropriate study by a committee created for that purpose and after review by any planning or zoning commission, the local governing authority may create a district and establish the regulations which apply within the district. The governing authority is required to create a commission to review all proposed construction, renovation, and demolition work within the district. Generally, unless otherwise provided by the local ordinance, construction, renovation, and demolition of private property within the district is prohibited unless the historic preservation district commission grants a certificate of appropriateness.

Cultural Economy

In December 2004, the office of cultural development, under the leadership of the office of the lieutenant governor, launched the first annual Cultural Economy Summit. The summit was the focal point for creating a Cultural Economy Initiative for Louisiana. The Cultural Economy Initiative has made important strides in strengthening and creating a

broader understanding of our state's cultural industries while upholding the natural synthesis between our creativity and our culture. The initiative resulted in a cultural economy strategic plan that progressively redefines the importance of the arts and culture to the state.

In building on the success of the annual Cultural Economy Summits, the office of the lieutenant governor, together with CRT developed a new initiative, the World Cultural Economic Forum (WCEF), which was unveiled August 16-26, 2007. WCEF is designed as a statewide event to coincide annually with the anniversary of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The forum, which brings together cultural ambassadors, educators, and arts and cultural leaders from around the world, features a series of events, programs, exhibitions, workshops and performances designed to demonstrate the value of culture internationally and shine the light on Louisiana's multi-faceted cultural industries, invite investment, and welcome national and international visitors.

Council for the Development of French in Louisiana

The Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL), a 50 member organization appointed by the governor, is empowered to do any and all things necessary to accomplish the development, utilization, and preservation of the French language as found in the state of Louisiana for the cultural, economic, and tourist benefit of the state. (R.S. 25:651) CODOFIL offers Louisiana's citizens, whether they be of French ancestry or not, the opportunity either to learn French or to enhance and utilize the French they already know; and to explore, understand and support Cajun, Creole, and Francophone heritage in Louisiana for the cultural, economic and touristic benefit of all its citizens.

- Office of Tourism

The tourism industry of Louisiana was growing at a healthy rate until Hurricanes Katrina and Rita adversely affected south Louisiana. The office of tourism has been working extensively to revive the industry by continuing to promote Louisiana while providing assistance to the rebuilding of the tourism infrastructure. The primary goal of the office of tourism is to provide for the design, plan, development, and implementation of the promotion of Louisiana's history, culture, art, folklife, recreational and leisure opportunities, natural and scenic resources, transportation, cuisine, attractions, accommodations, and events. It also is responsible for encouraging and assisting local government and private sector development for the promotion of tourism. (R.S. 51:1254)

In 2006, the office of tourism underwent a major reorganization and is now divided into the following three program divisions: administration, marketing, and welcome centers.

Administration

This division provides overall leadership to all divisions of the office of tourism as well as direct oversight of activities and promotions of the office. The goal of the division is to derive the maximum return on investment from the dollars invested in Louisiana tourism and to ensure that all programs of the office are provided support services to accomplish all of their program goals and objectives.

Marketing

The mission of this division is to provide advertising, promotion, development, and publicity for the assets of the state; to design, produce, and distribute materials in all media; and to reach as many potential tourists as possible.

- **Tourism Development and Sales**

The traditional marketing division was merged with a tourism product division to create a tourism development and sales division. It merges traditional on-the-ground marketing efforts with statewide, regional, national and international travel and tourism industry trade, tour operators, wholesalers, and suppliers. The sales team works closely with Louisiana tourism industry partners and organizes and implements an aggressive schedule of tourism sales missions, sponsors premier special events, and attends numerous trade shows to promote Louisiana as a top tourism destination. The tourism development team works closely with Louisiana tourism industry partners and other community-based organizations to develop high quality, and authentic tourism products for the sales team to promote. Projects include designation and promotion of Louisiana Scenic Byways, development of themed driving, biking, birding and other trails, coordination of efforts of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, and conducting several tourism industry outreach programs.

- **Consumer Information Services**

The research, distribution, and inquiry sections now are part of the marketing division. Distribution sees that the mail is processed for all program areas as well as servicing the material and supply needs of the network of welcome centers. The research section oversees all contracted research and generates its own data on advertising effectiveness, cost per inquiry, conversion rates and other data vital to overall advertising and marketing effectiveness. The inquiry section fields calls from consumers who plan to arrive in our state within the next few weeks and prepares fulfillment packets for immediate response to their needs.

- **Consolidated Marketing**

The office of tourism created a consolidated marketing section. This section is charged with creating and implementing a unified marketing plan and advertising campaign for CRT agencies in cooperation with their respective assistant secretaries and/or designated staff to brand the department and to leverage state dollar investment in media buys, print projects, and special promotions. It provides guidance to strengthen the department's marketing brand by providing strategic direction for the creation, management and distribution of marketing and advertising initiatives throughout CRT. In addition, it is responsible for establishing promotional and advertising programs utilizing a cohesive and consistent design aesthetic for both print and electronic collaterals such as ad materials, Internet/web pages, and special promotions.

Welcome Centers

Louisiana's welcome centers, located along major highways entering the state, provide safe, friendly environments for visitors to find information about area attractions. They also seek to encourage visitors to spend more time in the state.

The office of tourism has plans to transform the welcome center system with wireless Internet and regional interpretive centers that will communicate the unique qualities of their surrounding area through interactive kiosks. Each kiosk exhibit will be unique to the specific geography and culture of the area served by the welcome centers. The interactive design of the kiosk will allow visitors to either browse through topics randomly or to search for specific information on a targeted site.

Recently Completed/Ongoing Projects

- Construction is underway to totally replace the I-10/Slidell Welcome Center.
- The Vidalia Welcome Center is now housed in the new "City of Vidalia's Gateway Center" located on the riverfront at the base of the Mississippi River Bridge.
- I-59/Pearl River Welcome Center recently reopened in a new facility.
- I-20/Mound Welcome Center was reconstructed and reopened.
- A new center located in Baton Rouge's Capitol Park opened and is frequently used as a meeting and reception location.

Providing 24-hour security at all welcome centers continues to be a top priority.

Ongoing Tourism Initiatives

- America's Wetland Birding Trails

The America's Wetland Birding Trail is the final leg of birding trails in states bordering the Gulf of Mexico, linking Texas and Mississippi. Traveling along the trail visitors will explore some of Louisiana's most productive natural places and be exposed to some of the best birding in the country. In addition to exceptional birds and other wildlife, the birding trail also exposes visitors to some of the state's unique history and culture. The America's Wetland Birding Trail has expanded into four corridors: Louisiana Coastal, Mississippi River, Red River, and Zachary Taylor Parkway.

- Audubon Golf Trail

The Audubon Golf Trail (AGT) was created in 2001 under the tourism umbrella of the Office of the Lt. Governor for the purpose of stimulating economic development, enhancing tourism, attracting new residents and retirees to the state, and elevating the quality of life experience in the state. Named for naturalist/artist John James Audubon, all courses on the trail are members of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary for golf courses, a program dedicated to protecting the environment and preserving the natural

heritage of the game of golf. Starting with six charter courses the first year, the trail has grown to 13 courses for 2007. Black Bear Golf Course in Delhi opened July 1, 2006, as the only state-owned and operated facility. It has become the site of the AGT headquarters.

- **Film Industry**

The Film Industry, having recovered all jobs lost to Hurricane Katrina by March 2006, has gained more than 1,000 jobs and has generated at least \$750 million in production. Act No. 456 of the 2007 Regular Session provides for changes and modifications to the motion picture investor tax credits, especially with regard to state-certified infrastructure tax credits. It continues the tax incentive program that has made Louisiana the 3rd largest film production hub in the United States and the leading state in the buildup of infrastructure.

- **Louisiana Tourism Development Commission**

Within the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, this state agency serves as an advisor to the assistant secretary of the office of tourism and the secretary of the department on matters related to the development and implementation of programs to promote tourism and the historical, cultural, recreational, and scenic legacy of the state. (R.S. 51:1256-1257) There are 21 members of the commission, appointed by the governor, who have the following responsibilities:

- Reviewing and advising with regard to the major types of promotion and advertising contracts, prior to their approval.
- Aiding in the formulation of the master plan for tourism development.

- **Louisiana Tourism Promotion District**

The Louisiana Tourism Promotion district is a special taxing district whose boundaries are coterminous with the state. The purpose of the district is to provide funds to assist the state in the promotion of tourism. The district does this by levying and collecting a sales and use tax limited to three one hundredths of one percent. Specifically, these funds can be used by CRT for the promotion of the state's tourism industry through the purchase of media advertisements, provided that any funds used by the department for the purchase of in-state media advertisements shall not exceed 10% percent of all funds used and such expenditures are consistent with the office of tourism's strategic plan for marketing. (R.S. 51:1282-1287) Act No. 30 of the 2007 Regular Session eliminated the cap on the amount of proceeds available for tourism promotion which provided for an additional collection of \$6.5 million for new investments in Fiscal Year 2007-2008.

- **Louisiana Retirement Development Commission**

The commission which is in the office of the lieutenant governor (not in CRT) was created as an effort to enhance Louisiana's economic development. This eleven-member commission is charged with promoting Louisiana as a "retirement friendly" state and establishing programs to entice retirees to settle in the state. (R.S. 51:1317-1319) Among other things, the commission is responsible for the following:

- Formulating a strategic plan for retirement development.
- Monitoring and evaluating program guidelines to award Louisiana communities with a "Livable Louisiana Retirement Ready" seal of approval.
- Approving a marketing strategy to promote Louisiana as a retirement destination.
- Researching and developing programs designed to assist state government, local governments, private sector entities, and nonprofit entities in developing Louisiana as a retirement destination.

In October 2006, the commission adopted the comprehensive program design for the Redefine Life. Retire in Louisiana. Certified Retirement Community program which recognizes places in Louisiana that the state substantiates as premier locations for retirees (persons aged 55 and older). The structure for the program is a collaborative that includes the commission and a collection of participating communities committed to promoting their areas as retirement destinations. The selected communities receive inclusion in state-level marketing efforts, technical assistance, networking opportunities, and funding to support the program.

Local Government Activity: State law also provides for the creation of parish tourist commissions to promote tourism within their respective parishes. (R.S. 33:4754 et seq.) Often known as convention and visitors bureaus, tourist commissions generally have two revenue sources which support their promotional activities. First, each is authorized to levy a hotel occupancy tax. The maximum rate for this tax is set independently for each parish but in most cases is three or four percent of the amount charged for the room. Many tourist commissions also receive a rebate of the portion of the state sales tax which is collected from the hotels in their respective jurisdictions.

- Future of Tourism

According to a 2007 study conducted by the University of New Orleans on behalf of CRT, 24.1 million tourists are expected to visit Louisiana in 2008, the same as in 2004. As a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, tourism dropped to 18.7 million in 2005, the year the storms hit. It bottomed out at 18.2 million visitors in 2006 as the industry struggled to rebound. The study found that beyond 2008, projections show tourism is expected to grow slowly statewide to 24.4 million in 2009 and to 24.7 million in 2010. The downside is that it may be 2010 or 2011 before tourism spending is back to 2004 levels, when visitors spent \$10 billion in Louisiana. The study found that by 2010, tourism spending should reach about \$9.8 billion statewide, about \$200 million short of the \$10 billion chalked up in 2004.